United States Department of Agriculture
Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration
Federal Grain Inspection Service

Directive 9000.5 3/11/99

REMOTE ISSUANCE OF OFFICIAL CERTIFICATES

1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes guidelines for using computer technology to issue official inspection and weight certificates at locations other than official service points. This directive applies to certificates issued under the United States Grain Standards Act (USGSA), as amended, and the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (AMA).

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) is committed to the policy of adapting computer automation and Internet technology into its national inspection and weighing programs as a means to improve marketing efficiency and to reduce administrative costs.

Official certificates are important documents used in grain and commodity marketing. To expedite receipt of official certificates, customers have expressed interest in using special computer software to prepare and print a hard copy certificate at a location other than the inspection office. One technology that is available transmits encrypted data from the inspection location to another location where associated software de-encrypts and generates official certificates. Remote certification improves operating efficiency by reducing the time it takes for businesses to get official certificates into proper channels.

FGIS will evaluate plans regarding the installation and use of remote certification systems for inspection and weighing services. Approvals are contingent on operating plans that demonstrate the control of all official information and official documentation by official personnel.

3. REQUIREMENTS

a. Remote certification is available for any service which does not require a signature on the certificate as directed by the regulations. Therefore, these provisions do not apply to export grain shipments.

b. All grain certificates shall show the information and statements required under sections 800.160 through 800.165 of the regulations. All AMA service certificates shall show the information and statements required under section 868.70 through 868.75 of the regulations.

c. Official personnel must demonstrate how certificates will conform to official requirements regarding color, format, and required statements.

d. Detailed information must address what electronic and physical security features will assure the printing of accurate certificates. The information should address how the security feature works, how it controls unauthorized access to data to prevent manipulation, and what audit procedures are used to monitor certificate issuance.

e. An accountability and verification system is required to ensure the proper issuance of official certificates. Electronically generated certificate numbers must be computer generated with only initial user intervention to initiate the sequence at the time of program startup.

f. A hard copy certificate is required for the official file when a certificate is printed. In lieu of receiving a hard copy of the certificate at the official service site or office, the service provider may develop a comprehensive audit process to verify the correct issuance of certificates and to assure appropriate retention of the official file copy at a location other than the official service site or office.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Applicants for service:

(1) Notify the field office or agency manager of interest in remote certificate issuance.

(2) Provide a general concept plan regarding the process for remote certification including type of hardware and software package to be used.

(3) Prior to final approval, provide a detailed description of the process for the receipt and disposition of electronic files.

(4) Notify the field office or agency of any plans to change the process after approval.

b.   FGIS Field Offices/Agency Managers:

   (1)   Review the applicant=s general plan and identify each step of the process.

   (2)   Develop a detailed description of the process to be used for printing certificates which includes:

      (a)   Locations of remote issuance.

      (b)   Types of computer hardware and software.

      (c)   Electronic certification security. Include detailed information on how the security feature works and how data are protected from unauthorized manipulation.

      (d)   How certificate requirements regarding color, format, statements, and distribution of hard copies are achieved.

   (3)   Review software manufacturer=s security codes encryption method, with assistance from the Director, Field Management Division, to determine overall system security.

   (4)   Establish and maintain an accountability system for certificate numbers transferred.

   (5)   Establish and document an audit process to verify certificate accuracy.

   (6)   Present description of the process and recommendations for approval to the overseeing field office (when applicable).

   (7)   Maintain a copy of the detailed description of the process on file at the official agency=s main office (when applicable) and at the overseeing FGIS field office.

c.   FGIS Field Offices:

   (1)   Provide oversight.

   (2) Review official agency=s detailed description and recommendation of the project. Accept, amend, or reject proposal.

   (3) Monitor the issuance process during a trial period established by the field office.

   (4) Provide final approval or disapproval of the plan after the trial.

  d. Director, Field Management Division:

   (1) Provide support and advice to field offices and official agencies.

   (2) Provide evaluation of encryption and security systems.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about remote certification, contact the Standards and Procedures Branch at (202) 720-0252.

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